

Population Characteristics

The United States has an increasingly diverse population, which is demonstrated by the socio-demographic characteristics of children and their families. Over one-quarter of the population is under 20 years of age.

At the National, State, and local levels, policy-makers use population information to address health-related issues that affect mothers and children. By carefully analyzing and comparing data, workers in the health field can often isolate high-risk populations that require specific interventions. Policymakers can then tailor programs to meet the needs of these children and their families.

The following section presents data on several population characteristics that have an impact on maternal and child health program development and evaluation. Included are data on the age distribution of the population of the United States, the racial and ethnic makeup of the child population, poverty status, child care arrangements, and school dropout rates.



POPULATION OF CHILDREN

In 2004, there were over 73 million children under the age of 18 in the United States, representing approximately 25 percent of the total population. Young adults 20 to 24 years of age represented just over 7 percent of the population, while adults 25 to 64 years of age represented nearly 53 percent, and adults 65 years of age and over represented more than 12 percent. The median age in the United States for all races was 36 years.

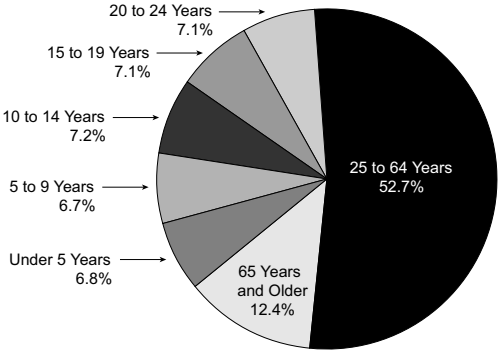
Since 2000, the number of children under 5 years of age has risen 4.6 percent, and the number of children ages 5 to 19 years has risen 2 percent. The number of adults ages 65 and older has risen approximately 3.5 percent over the same period.

Reflecting the trends in the general population, the population of children has become increasingly diverse over the past several decades. Since 1980, the percentage of children who are Hispanic or Asian/Pacific Islander has more than doubled, while the percentage who are non-

Hispanic White has declined. Hispanic children represented 9 percent of all children in 1980 and almost 19 percent in 2004; likewise, Asian/Pacific Islander children represented 2 percent in 1980 and 4 percent in 2004. In the same period, the percentage of children who are White dropped by approximately 18 percent to represent 58 percent of the child population in 2004, while the percentage of children who are Black remained relatively stable. In addition, nearly 3 percent of children were of more than one racial group in 2004.

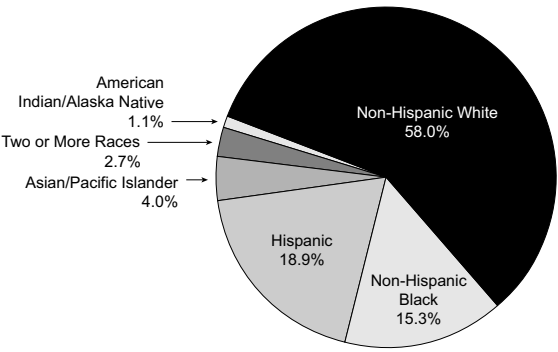
U.S. Resident Population, by Age Group: 2004

Source (I.1): U.S. Census Bureau



Population of Children Under Age 18, by Race/Ethnicity: 2004

Source (I.1): U.S. Census Bureau



CHILDREN OF FOREIGN-BORN PARENTS

The foreign-born population in the United States has increased substantially since the 1970s, largely due to immigration from Asia and Latin America. In 2003, over 20 percent of children living in the United States had at least one foreign-born parent. Of all children, 16.5 percent were born in the United States to foreign-born parents and 4 percent were themselves foreign-

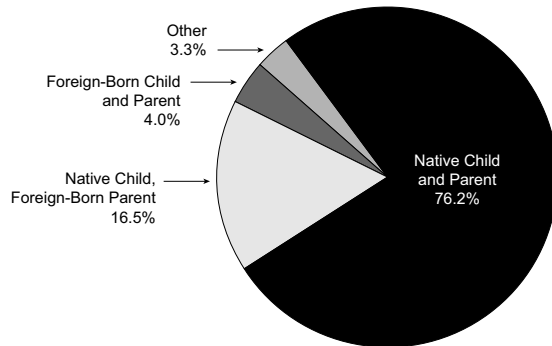
born. Most children (76.2 percent) were native-born and lived in households with native-born parents.

Children with foreign-born parents were more likely than children with native-born parents to have family incomes below 100 percent of the Federal poverty level. Health insurance coverage also varies by nativity: native-born children with foreign-born parents were the most likely to have public insurance, while foreign-born children

with foreign-born parents were the most likely to be uninsured. Native-born children with native-born parents were most likely to have private insurance.

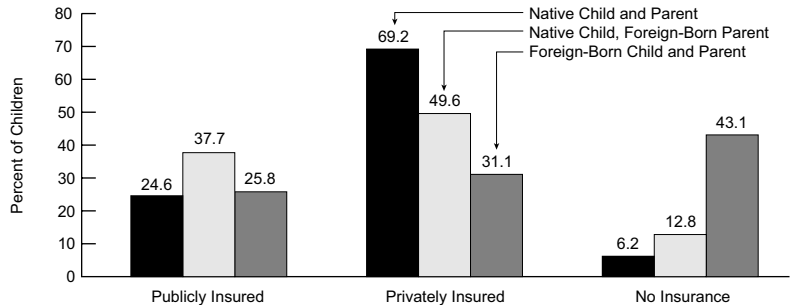
Children Under Age 18, by Nativity of Child and Parent(s):* 2003

Source (I.2): Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, National Center for Health Statistics, National Survey of Children's Health



Children Under Age 18, by Health Insurance Status and Nativity of Child and Parent(s):* 2003

Source (I.2): Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, National Center for Health Statistics, National Survey of Children's Health



*The term "native parent" indicates that both parents who live with the child were born in the U.S.; "foreign-born parent" indicates that one or both parents were born outside of the U.S.; "other" includes children with parents whose nativity status is unknown and foreign-born children with native parents.

CHILDREN IN POVERTY

In 2003, more than 12.8 million children under 18 years of age lived in families with incomes below the Federal poverty threshold (\$18,400 for a family of four).¹ Of all children living in the United States, 17.2 percent lived in families with incomes below the poverty level. Children represented 36 percent of people in poverty but only 25 percent of the population as a whole.

Poverty affects living conditions and access to health care and nutrition, all of which contribute

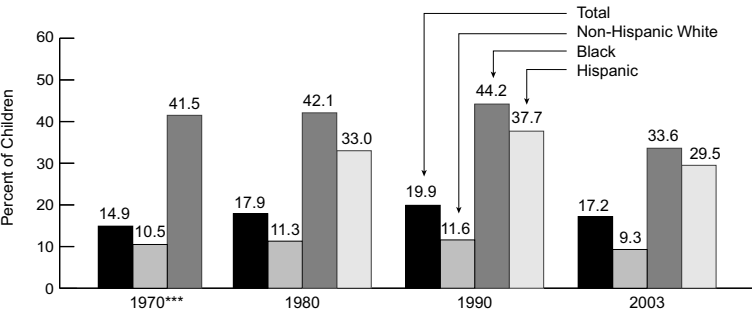
to health status. Black and Hispanic children were particularly vulnerable. A much higher proportion of Black (33.6 percent) and Hispanic (29.5 percent) related children* under age 18 were poor than were related non-Hispanic White children (9.3 percent).

Children in single-parent families are particularly likely to be poor: of children under age 6 living with a single mother, 52.9 percent lived in poverty, compared to 9.6 percent of children of the same age in married-couple families.

¹ Following the Office of Management and Budget's Statistical Policy Directive 14, the Census Bureau uses a set of money income thresholds that vary by family size and composition to determine who is in poverty.

Related Children* Under Age 18 Living in Families Below 100 Percent of Poverty Level, by Race/Ethnicity:** 1970-2003

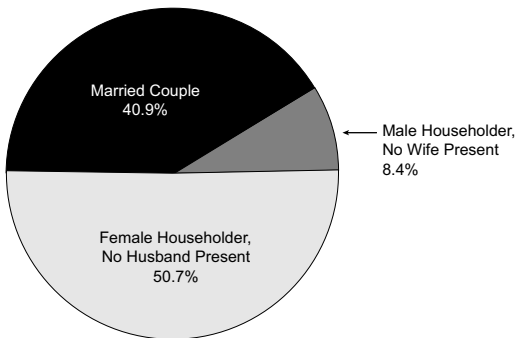
Source (I.3): U.S. Census Bureau, Current Population Survey



*Related children are those under 18 who are related to the householder by birth, marriage, or adoption.
**The CPS currently allows respondents to choose more than one race. Prior to 2002, only one race was reported. Figures reported here are for respondents who chose one race; however, Hispanics may be of any race.
***Hispanic ethnicity was not reported until 1973.

Families Below 100 Percent of Poverty Level, by Family Type: 2003

Source (I.3): U.S. Census Bureau, Current Population Survey



SCHOOL DROPOUTS

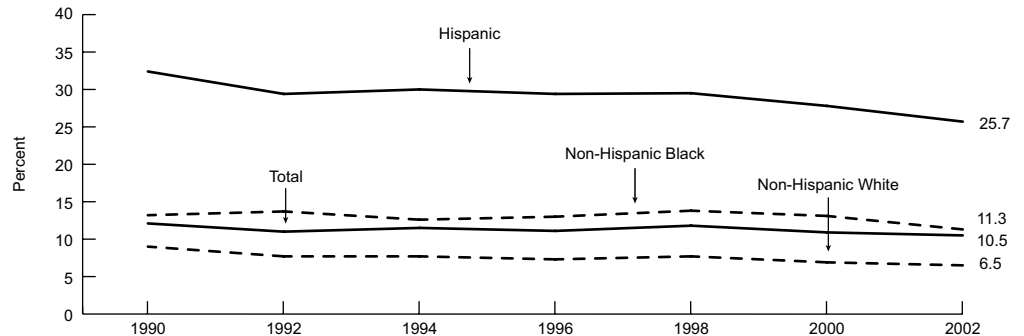
As of October 2002, the latest year for which data are available, there were approximately 3,721,000 high school dropouts* in the United States. This translates into a total dropout rate of 10.5 percent among people in this age group, a rate that has been in decline over the past several decades.

Since 1970, Hispanic students have had the highest dropout rates, representing 25.7 percent of Hispanic young adults in 2003. The high Hispanic dropout rate is partly due to the high dropout rate among Hispanics born outside of the United States (41.4 percent). First generation Hispanics, those who were born in the U.S. but have at least one parent born elsewhere, have a much lower dropout rate (14.4 percent), and the rate among second generation or higher Hispanics, those who were born in the U.S. to American-born parents, is comparable to that of other racial/ethnic groups (11.3 percent). The dropout rates among non-Hispanic Whites and non-Hispanic Blacks in 2002 were 6.5 and 11.3 percent, respectively.

According to the U.S. Department of Commerce, high school dropouts are more likely to be unemployed and, when they are employed, earn less than those who completed high school. According to the National Center for Health Statistics, those who did not complete high school report worse health than their peers who did complete high school, regardless of income.

Status School Dropout Rates* for Ages 16-24, by Race/Ethnicity: 1990-2002

Source (I.4): U.S Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics



*Status dropouts refers to 16- to 24-year-olds who are not enrolled in school and have not earned high school credentials (diploma or equivalent.)

MATERNAL AGE

The general fertility rate rose to 66.1 births per 1,000 women ages 15 to 44 years in 2003. The birth rate among mothers ages 35 to 44 years continued to increase; rates for women in their mid twenties to early thirties also increased, but to a lesser extent. The birth rates among teenagers and women in their early twenties declined. The rate among 15- to 17-year-olds was 42 percent lower than a recent peak in 1991, and the rate among 18- and 19-year-olds declined 25 percent during the same period.

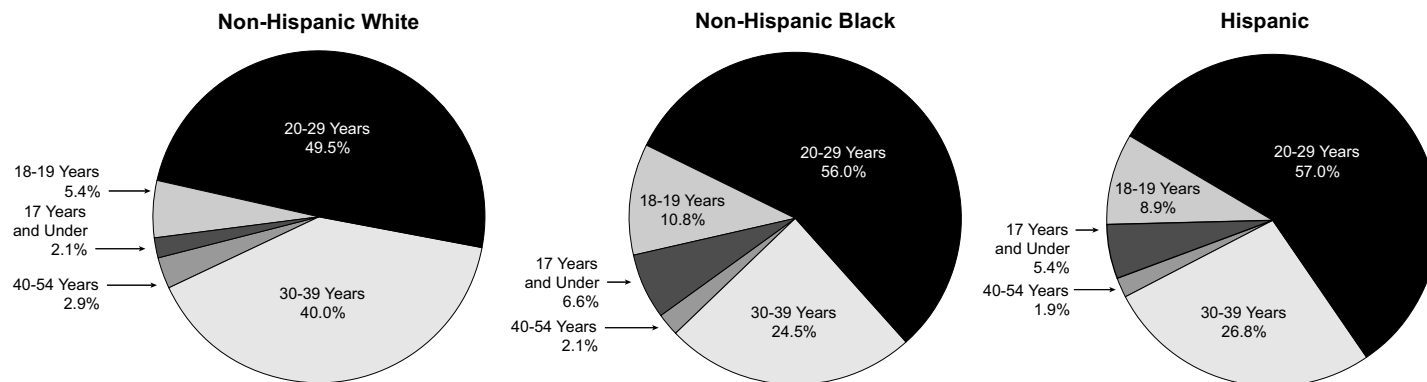
In 2003, 10 percent of births were to women under 20, over half were to women in their twenties, just over one third were to women in their thirties, and almost 3 percent were to women in their forties and early fifties. The average age at first birth in 2003 was 25.2 years, the highest yet recorded. The average age at first birth has risen from 21.4 years in 1970.

Among non-Hispanic Black and Hispanic women, over half of births in 2003 were to women in their twenties. Among non-Hispanic White women, a smaller proportion of births

were to women in that age group (49.5 percent). The proportion of births that were to women under 20 years of age was higher among non-Hispanic Black and Hispanic women (17.4 and 14.3 percent, respectively) than non-Hispanic White women (7.5 percent). Births to non-Hispanic White women were more likely to be to women in their thirties, forties, and early fifties.

Distribution of Births, by Maternal Age and Race/Ethnicity: 2003

Source (I.5): Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, National Center for Health Statistics, National Vital Statistics System



WORKING MOTHERS AND CHILD CARE

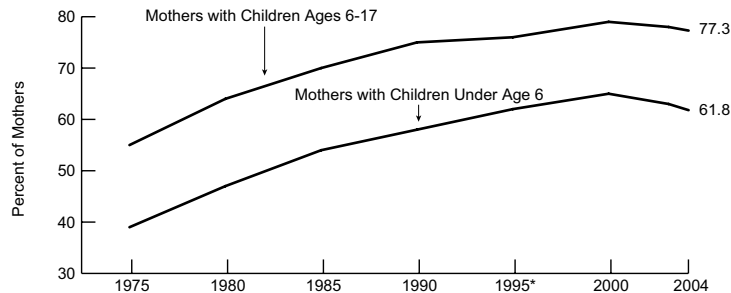
In 2004, 70.4 percent of women with children under 18 years of age were in the labor force (either employed or looking for work). Of mothers with preschool-aged children (younger than 6 years), 61.8 percent were in the labor force and over 57 percent were actually employed. Of women with children ages 6 to 17 years, 77.3 percent were in the labor force and almost 74 percent were employed. Employed mothers of children in the older age group were more likely

to work full time than mothers of children under 6 years of age (76.7 versus 69.8 percent). Married mothers with a present spouse were less likely than mothers in other marital situations to be in the labor force (67.8 versus 77.1 percent); however, almost all married women in the labor force were employed, while women in other situations were more likely to be looking for work. The unemployment rate among married mothers was 3.7 percent, compared to a rate of 9.7 percent among mothers of other marital statuses.

Among children under age 5 with employed mothers, child care arrangements varied by family income. In 2002, children with family incomes of less than 200 percent of the Federal poverty level (FPL) were most likely to be in relative or parent/other care, while children with family incomes of 200 percent FPL or more were most likely to be in center-based care. Family child care and nanny/babysitter care were the least common types of care among children of both income groups, although each was more common among children with higher family incomes.

Mothers in the Work Force: 1975-2004

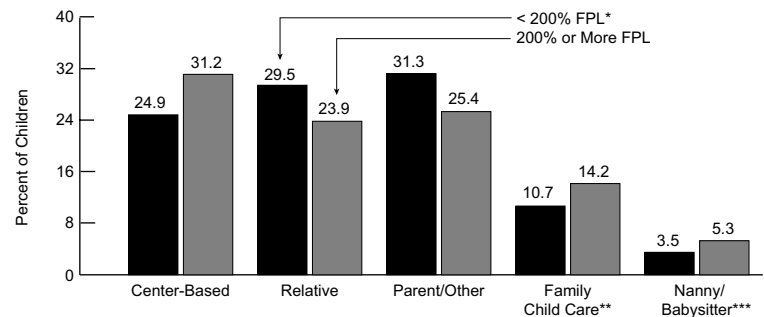
Source (I.6): U.S. Department of Labor



*Data for 1995 and later are not strictly comparable with data for earlier years due to changes in the survey and estimation process.

Child Care Arrangements for Children Under Age 5 with Employed Mothers, by Family Income: 2002

Source (I.7): Urban Institute, National Survey of America's Families



*Federal poverty level, equal to \$18,100 for a family of four in 2002.

**Care by a non-relative in the provider's home.

***Care by a non-relative in the child's home.